

The Examined Life

Examining... The Philosophy of Virtue and Character Supplementary Texts

Plato's Apology

The Apology is Plato's version of the speech given by Socrates as he defended himself in 399 BC against the charges of "corrupting the young, and by not believing in the gods in whom the city believes, but in other daimonia that are novel" (24b). "Apology" here has its earlier meaning (now usually expressed by the word "apologia") of speaking in defense of a cause or of one's beliefs or actions.

Socrates' sentence is death:

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is that which I ought to pay or to receive? What shall be done to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care about - wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties. Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to follow in this way and live, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to everyone of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the state before he looks to the interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions. What shall be done to such a one? Doubtless some good thing, O men of Athens, if he has his reward.

Socrates is offered exile:

If I tell you that this would be a disobedience to a divine command, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that the greatest good of man is daily to converse about virtue, and all that concerning which you hear me examining myself and others, and that the life which is unexamined is not worth living - that you are still less likely to believe.

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1

The Nicomachean Ethics is the name normally given to Aristotle's best-known work on ethics. The work, which plays a pre-eminent role in defining Aristotelian ethics, consists of ten books, originally separate scrolls, and is understood to be based on notes from his lectures at the Lyceum, which were either edited by or dedicated to Aristotle's son, Nicomachus. The theme of the work is the Socratic question which had previously been explored in Plato's works, of how men should best live.

Since happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue, we must consider the nature

of virtue; for perhaps we shall thus see better the nature of happiness. The true student of politics, too, is thought to have studied virtue above all things; for he wishes to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws. As an example of this we have the lawgivers of the Cretans and the Spartans, and any others of the kind that there may have been. And if this inquiry belongs to political science, clearly the pursuit of it will be in accordance with our original plan. But clearly the virtue we must study is human virtue; for the good we were seeking was human good and the happiness human happiness. By human virtue we mean not that of the body but that of the soul; and happiness also we call an activity of soul. But if this is so, clearly the student of politics must know somehow the facts about soul, as the man who is to heal the eyes or the body as a whole must know about the eyes or the body; and all the more since politics is more prized and better than medicine; but even among doctors the best educated spend much labour on acquiring knowledge of the body. The student of politics, then, must study the soul, and must study it with these objects in view, and do so just to the extent which is sufficient for the questions we are discussing; for further precision is perhaps something more laborious than our purposes require.

http://www.constitution.org/ari/ethic_01.htm#stylesheet_body

Nietzsche's First Essay in the Genealogy of Morals

On the Genealogy of Morality, or On the Genealogy of Morals, subtitled "A Polemic", is a book by German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and is considered by some Nietzsche scholars to be a work of sustained brilliance and power as well as his masterpiece. In the "First Treatise" Nietzsche aims to show that the valuations "good/evil" and "good/bad" have distinct origins and that the two senses of "good" reflect, in their origins, radically opposed meanings. The noble mode of valuation calls what it itself stands for "good", that is, everything which is powerful and life-asserting. In the "good/evil" distinction, which is the product of what Nietzsche calls "slave morality", so-called "evil" equates to what aristocratic morality calls "good". This valuation develops out of the resentment of the weak in the face of the powerful, by whom they are oppressed and whom they envy.

The beginning of the slaves' revolt in morality occurs when resentment itself turns creative and gives birth to values: the resentment of those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge. Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying 'yes' to itself, slave morality says 'no' on principle to everything that is 'outside', 'other', 'non-self': and this 'no' is its creative deed. This reversal of the evaluating glance – this essential orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself – is a feature of resentment: in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all, – its action is basically a reaction. The opposite is the case with the noble method of valuation: this acts and grows spontaneously, seeking out its opposite only so that it can say 'yes' to itself even more thankfully and exultantly, – its negative concept 'low', 'common', 'bad' is only a pale contrast created after the event compared to its positive basic concept, saturated with life and passion, 'we the noble, the good, the beautiful and the happy!'

Schopenhauer's On Thinking for Oneself

Arthur Schopenhauer was a German philosopher best known for his book, *The World as Will and Representation*, in which he claimed that our world is driven by a continually dissatisfied will, continually seeking satisfaction. Influenced by Eastern philosophy, he maintained that the "truth was recognized by the sages of India" consequently, his solutions to suffering were similar to those of Vedantic and Buddhist thinkers (e.g., asceticism). The influence of "transcendental ideality" led him to choose atheism.

This rule applies to the life of the intellect as well as to matters of practice. A man must wait for the right moment. Not even the greatest mind is capable of thinking for itself at all times. Hence a great mind does well to spend its leisure in reading, which, as I have said, is a substitute for thought; it brings stuff to the mind by letting another person do the thinking; although that is always done in a manner not our own. Therefore, a man should not read too much, in order that his mind may not become accustomed to the substitute and thereby forget the reality; that it may not form the habit of walking in well-worn paths; nor by following an alien course of thought grow a stranger to its own. Least of all should a man quite withdraw his gaze from the real world for the mere sake of reading; as the impulse and the temper which prompt to thought of one's own come far oftener from the world of reality than from the world of books. The real life that a man sees before him is the natural subject of thought; and in its strength as the primary element of existence, it can more easily than anything else rouse and influence the thinking mind.

<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/schopenhauer/arthur/lit/chapter5.html>

Sartre's Being and Nothingness, Chapter Three

'FIRST ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHERS: LOVE, LANGUAGE, MASOCHISM'

Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology is a 1943 book by philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's main purpose is to assert the individual's existence as prior to the individual's essence. His overriding concern in writing the book was to demonstrate that free will exists.

While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me. We are by no means dealing with unilateral relations with an object-in-itself, but with reciprocal and moving relations. The following descriptions of concrete behavior must therefore be envisaged within the perspective of conflict. Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others.

I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculpts it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it. The Other holds a secret the secret of what I am. He makes me be and thereby he possess me, and this possession .is nothing other than the consciousness of possessing me. I in the recognition of my object-state have proof that he has this consciousness. By virtue of consciousness the Other is for me simultaneously the one who has stolen my being from me and the one who causes "there to be" a being which is my

being.

<http://www.dhspriory.org/kenny/PhilTexts/Sartre/BeingAndNothingness.pdf> p421 pdf, p364 book

Emmerson's Self-Reliance

Self-Reliance is an essay written by American transcendentalist philosopher and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson. It contains the most thorough statement of one of Emerson's recurrent themes, the need for each individual to avoid conformity and false consistency, and follow his or her own instincts and ideas. It is the source of one of Emerson's most famous quotations: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines."

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

Virtues are, in the popular estimate, rather the exception than the rule. There is the man and his virtues. Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily non-appearance on parade. Their works are done as an apology or extenuation of their living in the world, — as invalids and the insane pay a high board. Their virtues are penances. I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is for itself and not for a spectacle.

<http://www.emersoncentral.com/selfreliance.htm>

Thoreau's Walden, Chapter Two

Where I lived and what I lived for

Walden is an American book written by noted transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings. The work is part personal declaration of independence, social experiment, voyage of spiritual discovery, satire, and manual for self-reliance. First published in 1854, it details Thoreau's experiences over the course of two years, two months, and two days in a cabin he built near Walden Pond, amidst woodland owned by his friend and mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson, near Concord, Massachusetts. The book compresses the time into a single calendar year and uses passages of four seasons to symbolize human development.

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm#linkW2>